634 among the other ministers. The rich and important cantons
645 were entrusted to the Kamsaogo Naba, chief eunuch. This was
[839] because the emperor wanted to be sure that he would recover the fortune left by this minister at his death. Since the latter was merely the guardian of the king's wives, he had no legitimate heirs. The eunuch appointed to replace him had to establish his own personal fortunes. Only the horses or women which the late minister might have given [49] during his lifetime to persons in his section were left with their owners. [Ed., Mossi villages are
[621] divided into sections (Fr., quartier), which are really hamlets containing several households or compounds. These sections are indigenous, not colonial subdivisions.]

Powers of the Ministers over the Vassal Chiefs of the Mogho Naba

634 It would be a mistake to think that before the French occu-
645 pation the ministers had any great authority over the canton chief.
642 Actually, the ministers' role, as has been pointed out, was to act as intermediaries between the emperor and the canton chiefs. They could not, however, under any right or pretext, intervene in canton affairs, since the kombéré was the only lord in the area whose command had been conferred upon him as an appanage by the Mogho Naba.

That is why it has been possible for canton chiefs who were dissatisfied with the minister under whose rule they found themselves to report, henceforth, to another minister. Furthermore, the Mogho Naba saw no objection to this. The Mossi expression,
[638] Gansobend'ka sambiri n'tont vigri yé ("hospitality is not like kinship; you can evade it") amply illustrates the accuracy of the foregoing. If it is further noted that before the French occupation
[651] the naba came to Ouagadougou only once a year to pay their respects to the emperor and to bring him annual tribute, one will readily understand the insignificance of the ministers' authority over them.

This does not mean, of course, that it was possible to [50] do without any intermediaries, but rather that it was possible to choose them freely. In any case, one of the incentives to

651 [72] (c) Fishing. Fishing in the larger water holes could take
226 place only by authorization of the canton chiefs. The day on
634 which fishing took place was treated as a holiday. All the young men in the village and their neighbors, even if the latter did not belong to the canton, came out on the day set by the canton chief and fished for the benefit of the naba. All large fish were reserved for him, and only the small ones were left to the fishermen.

This practice still prevails.

776 Other common laws. Many deities are worshipped by the
782 Mossi. Groves, fields, mountains, etc., all have their "god."
661 It often happens that the naba (canton chief), at the behest of the soothsayers, offers an animal. This may be a sheep, a goat, or even a cow, and it is offered to one or another of the deities, either for his personal interests or for those of his people, or perhaps to ask for rain. The naba dispatches some sogoné [servitor] or samand'kamba [people of the outer courtyard] to one of the villages in his canton to find a victim. The animal is taken without its owner having any right to complain or to ask for compensation. Is there not a Mossi saying to the effect, Talagh-gounda [538] Naba'gninga the serf raises livestock for the benefit of his naba)"?

For sacrifices prescribed for the Mogho Naba, the animals are provided either by the inhabitants of the [73] town of Ouagadougou and its environs or by the canton chiefs.

Labor Service Customarily Required of the Mossi on Behalf of their Chiefs

651 Forced labor was used to cultivate the fields of the naba and to repair or construct their houses.

647 The Mogho Naba. (a) Cultivation of fields. The duty of
651 cultivating the fields of the Mogho Naba fell entirely on the Bilbalsé,
241 the residents of Bilbalogo (section of the Baloum Naba) and on all former servitors and descendants of former servitors. The Kam Naba (chief of the young men), charged with assembling the workers, had a crier announce in all the important markets that on such-and-such a day the Bilbalsé were to assemble in the emperor's

181 They are very susceptible to teaching. The little slaves raised in
153 Malta learned the French language well, and all those who have met them say that they are quite intelligent. We had children in our school who quicly learned writing, reading, and arithmetic, and who did not forget what they had learned when they got married and had to leave school to work in the fields. Reading remains a pastime to them, and they keep up their knowledge of the French language. We did not notice among them what has so often been pointed out about the little Arabs, who give great promise when young, signs of real intelligence, and who do not live up to this promise when they grow up. The intelligence of the Mossi develops with the years, and this would make it possible to exercise considerable influence over them.
000 Teaching that opens their minds, however, should not cause them to lose their religious sense without contributing anything in its place. Within a short period of time this would bring about the demoralization and downfall of this people who seem capable of rapid progress, and it would be a pity.

538 They like to tell fables, and a volume of Mossi literature could easily be compiled by gathering the historical legends, proverbs, and fables which are to be found among this people. As an example, we shall now recount a few stories we have been told. As in all primitive tales, animals play the role of intelligent actors. The Romaunt of the Rose has long since familiarized us with this kind of literature.

The Bad Vulture and the White Hawk

539 A bald vulture was wandering about the bush. A white hawk came by and said to the vulture, "Why have you nothing to eat?" The vulture replied, "It is true, I have nothing to eat. May God help me find something." The hawk said, "God cannot give people enough food to satisfy their hunger." The vulture answered, "If God does not give me something to eat, I shall not eat."

The white hawk saw a dove alighting on a stick. The hawk swooped down upon her, but the stick pierced his breast and came out behind his head. The vulture came and ate the hawk.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

they might take the lives and property of their subjects. There are many stories of avaricious chiefs who convicted wealthy commoners of spurious crimes and had them executed or banished in order to seize their wealth. There are also stories of twin tricksters, Raogo, a boy, and Poko, a girl, two *enfants terribles* who always succeeded in outwitting and killing avaricious chiefs. When I asked a district chief to explain the significance of the Raogo and Poko tales, he replied that they were "meaningless stories told by children who do not understand how difficult it is for a chief to command and protect men." This remark prompted one of his officials to add that in olden days, people gladly supported the Mogho Naba and his chiefs in order to be safe from their enemies—a statement which might have been made by a conscientious government official anywhere. However, whether commoners or chiefs, all Mossi believed that men must have government, and that without it chaos would prevail.

The Mossi political organization was subject to severe strains. For one thing, its economic basis was not very strong. True, goods and services were channeled to the capital from the smallest areas, and in time this permitted the establishment of increasingly complex governmental structures. Nevertheless, the Mossi fiscal system was not highly developed, and much of the revenue the rulers received came to them in the form of legal fees and gifts. Moreover, most of these revenues were irregular in nature.

Despite this fact, the Mossi believed that their rulers were wealthy—and there can be no doubt that they were wealthier than their subjects. Nevertheless, visiting Europeans found little difference between the standard of living of the chiefs and that of the people. Binger would have us believe that Mogho Naba Sanum bragged so much about imaginary wealth, including 10,000 horses, that he "managed to convince himself of it."[36] Binger's subsequent remarks about Sanum's resources are illuminating even if somewhat biased, because they throw light on the economic basis of the Ouagadougou kingdom. He tells us that Sanum's revenues were

> not well regulated. He lives on gifts and offerings which people have brought him with the aim of obtaining justice, or to demand something from him. He sometimes sends a band of men to capture slaves in Kipirsi country, or at least supports such ventures. But these revenues, like those of all the black chiefs, are not sufficient, because these men are prone to squander their resources. As a result, these sovereigns are compelled to use expedients in order to procure horses and other commodities. Thus, like the rulers of Tieba, Pegue, and Kong, Naba Sanum still has captives in villages devoted to agriculture, but he does not take proper care of these villages. If he does not receive enough millet in the form of gifts, he must sell his slaves in order to procure it.[37]